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**The impact and journey of the Certificate in Contemporary Living (CCL) – a  
third level course for adults with intellectual disabilities at Trinity  
College, Dublin (Ireland)**

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# Inklusive Forschung

Gemeinsam mit Menschen mit Lernschwierigkeiten  
forschen

Buchner / Koenig / Schuppener  
**Inklusive Forschung**



Tobias Buchner  
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Lernschwierigkeiten forschen

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## **The impact and journey of the Certificate in Contemporary Living (CCL) – a third level course for adults with intellectual disabilities at Trinity College, Dublin (Ireland)**

### **1 Student’s voice**

“Hello, my name is Tomas, I am a graduate of Trinity College Dublin and I also have an intellectual disability. Here is my story.

We all try hard to fit in. It was difficult for me to form friendships, especially as a young child. When I went out to play, I was not accepted by some of the other children on my street and I remember my sister standing up for me.

When I started Secondary School, as I was putting my uniform on for the first time, I said to my mum “It’s good to feel normal”. Even though it became a challenge for me to cope with the work load on completion of my school exams I knew I wanted to learn and study some more.

After attending the National Institute for Intellectual Disability (NIID) Inclusive Summer School, I applied for and secured a place on the Certificate in Contemporary Living (CCL) course. Attending college enabled me to learn how to travel for the first time independently in and out of the city using public transport. Now I travel completely on my own to meet up with friends.

On the first day of college, I did not know anyone and I found it a little scary. I did not know what to expect from college life or if I would fit in. Now, as a graduate I still keep in contact with a lot of college friends and we continue to meet up in the city. I found the CCL course different and exciting. I gradually gained knowledge from the different subjects and modules.

I am very honoured to be an Ambassador of the course. I have worked with staff supporting the setup of CCL programmes in other universities around Ireland. I have also been an active researcher with the NIID. I travelled and presented with staff abroad in many countries including Iceland and the USA where I was a key note speaker on the student panel at The State of the Art Conference at George Mason University, Conference on Postsecondary Education and People with ID, Washington D.C.

My first job after graduation was with a well-known and respected accountants firm in Dublin. I'm now working two full days a week at a top law firm also in the city. I am extremely happy in the job. I am hoping to remain with this firm for the foreseeable future. I have a good active social life. Life is good."

Tomas graduated from the CCL in 2011 and continues to work in various ways alongside staff at the NIID. Tomas is also part of a growing cohort of CCL graduates, who have become agents of change and who continue to challenge the barriers that face adults with intellectual disabilities in Ireland.

## **2 Setting the scene – Historical perspectives on education for people with intellectual disabilities**

Tomas' experience contrasts sharply with the dominant experience of people with intellectual disabilities until recent years. Traditionally, people with intellectual disabilities have been considered "non-educable" in Western and non-Western societies, meaning that they did not receive an education as their peers without disability. The 1960s however witnessed a change in North and Western Europe, the United States and Australia where social responses replaced individual and medical responses to disability (Albrecht, Seelman, & Bury 2001). Disability activists, parents of children with intellectual disabilities, and progressive professionals advocated for the rights of persons with intellectual disabilities leading in 1971 to the proclamation of the first international human rights document specifically focused on intellectual disabilities, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons. Simultaneously, scientific developments in the field of psychology took place demonstrating the learning potential of people with intellectual disabilities (Parmenter 2011). These developments, along with the progressive de-institutionalisation of people with intellectual disabilities, led to the development and provision of special and later mainstream, education to people with intellectual disabilities.

In Western societies where firm attempts to provide primary and secondary education to people with intellectual disabilities are made, there is still one big challenge, that of opening third level education to people with intellectual disabilities. In the last number of years, however, opportunities for tertiary study for people with intellectual disabilities have gradually increased in higher education in Nordic countries, Western Europe, United States and Australia.

In this chapter, we present one of these courses, the Certificate in Contemporary Living (CCL), run at the School of Education, TCD. We start by outlining available models for inclusive higher education to provide a broader conceptual background to the CCL. Next, we describe in detail all aspects of CCL program-

me including its evolution, its ongoing development and its associated research. Finally we outline the CCL's position within TCD and in the wider community.

### 3 Inclusive Higher Education programmes for people with intellectual disabilities

Globally, both the USA and Canada have shown strong leadership in the development of tertiary education opportunities for adults with intellectual disabilities. These fall into three broad categories: the substantially separate model, the mixed or hybrid model, and the totally inclusive model (Hart, Grigal, Sax, Martinez & Will 2006). Each type is presented below with examples from an Irish context.

**Substantially separate model:** Students participate only in classes with other students with disabilities (sometimes referred to as a "life skills" or "transition" programme). Students may have the opportunity to participate in generic social activities on campus and may be offered employment experience, often through a rotation of pre-established employment slots on-or off-campus (Hart, Grigal, Sax, Martinez & Will 2006). 'Project Interact', which ran successfully before the development of the CCL in 2004 is an example of this model. 'Project Interact' involved adults with intellectual disabilities travelling from their service provider, St. John of God, with the support of agency staff to attend classes and social activities hosted in TCD by the department of Occupational Therapy.

**Mixed/hybrid model:** Students participate in social activities and/or academic classes with students without disabilities (for audit or credit) and also participate in classes with other students with disabilities (sometimes referred to as "life skills" or "transition" classes). This model typically provides students with employment experience on/off campus (Hart, Grigal, Sax, Martinez & Will 2006). The CCL is an example of this model of inclusive education. Students leave with a TCD Certificate and are required to pay fees.

**Inclusive individual support model:** Students receive individualised services (e.g., educational coach, tutor, technology, natural college supports) for audit or credit of certificate programmes and/or degree programs. The individual student's vision and career goals drive the educational services. There is no program based on campus (Hart, Grigal, Sax, Martinez & Will 2006). The inclusive individual support model is the latest model of education to be introduced in Ireland and is currently running at the National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG) since 2011, and more recently at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. Students leave with a recognised qualification depending on the level they achieve at completion of the course.

As indicated above, the Irish landscape of post-secondary education for adults with intellectual disabilities has dramatically changed over the past 10 years. Prior

to 2004, a range of segregated models were being offered in community colleges or by the Vocational Education Committee<sup>1</sup> in certain parts of the country. Some of these courses continue to include “Life Skills” training and continue to be delivered in partnership with State funded service providers.

In 2004, two Irish universities launched third level education programmes for people with intellectual disabilities. University College Dublin launched its one year part-time Certificate in Citizenship and Advocacy, while Trinity College launched its two year full-time CCL programme. Both programmes fell into the mixed/hybrid model.

Since the development of the two-year CCL certificate, many other Irish colleges and universities have offered educational opportunities at post-secondary level. The Strategic Innovation Fund from the Irish Department of Education, enabled the NIID to ‘roll out’ the CCL programme to five other Irish Higher Educational Institutions. As part of this process, CCL staff and students attended Open Days with each partner site, shared the CCL modules’ content, provided tutor training and assisted with student recruitment. As a result of this initiative five Irish colleges and Institutes of Technology<sup>2</sup> are now running a version of the CCL programme which is done in partnership with a diversity of college departments along with service providers and community employment agencies.

## 4 Overview of the CCL programme

The CCL is a two-year course aimed at promoting full citizenship for students with intellectual disabilities through development of learning and social networks, as well as career opportunities (O’Brien, O’Keeffe, Kenny, Fitzgerald & Curtis 2008).

It is designed for people with an intellectual disability who have a strong motivation and a particular interest in furthering their education within a tertiary environment. Interested individuals are invited to attend an Open Day which provides an opportunity for them to learn more about the course content and to meet and talk with CCL staff, graduates and their parents/guardians. Candidates are also invited to attend a formal interview and a group workshop. Successful candidates are selected on the basis of their level of engagement in the interview and workshop, previous level of formal study and potential for personal and professional growth / development. Like every other college student, they have a student card that allows them access to all college facilities and services.

1 VEC = Vocational Educational Committee which were statutory local boards with the responsibility of providing some secondary but mainly adult education in Ireland. However since 2013 VEC’s are being replaced by Education & Training Boards (ETB).

2 Dundalk Institute of Technology, Waterford Institute of Technology, University College Cork, St. Angela’s College Sligo, Mary Immaculate College Limerick

### **4.1. Development of the CCL programme**

A number of research projects have informed and supported the evolution of the CCL over the last ten years and are presented throughout the chapter. In 2007, the National Disability Authority (the independent state body providing expert advice on disability policy and practice to the Irish government and the public sector) funded a two year project to identify development opportunities of the CCL programme (O’Brien et al. 2008). This was achieved through exploring the experiences of students with intellectual disabilities and other stakeholders (e.g. family members, support staff, tutors).

Six overall lessons to develop the CCL course were identified and are listed below. Subsequent actions taken as a result of this project are expanded on in this chapter.

1. Need for a Transition process for students existing the course on completion (section 5, PATH process)
2. Need to develop a vocational aspect of the CCL (section 6, NIID Business Partners’ Network)
3. Need to engage with and to support other third level institutions to develop educational opportunities for this cohort (section 3, CCL roll out)
4. Need for creative teaching methods and inclusion of mentors role to reflect diverse learning styles (section 4.5, students’ experience of learning)
5. Benefits of attending third level institution for all students “regardless of their abilities”
6. Need to ensure true inclusion (presence and participation) (section 4.4, monitoring through action based research)

### **4.2 Outline of the CCL Programme**

The course programme is made up of 11 modules (see Table 1) which cover the expressive arts, the humanities, sports and recreation and transferrable skills. CCL students are also provided with opportunities to partake in the wider campus life – they audit courses of their choice alongside their undergraduate peers (see O’Connor, Kubiak, Espiner & O’Brien 2012), they undertake an expressive arts programmes under the guidance of professional artists, and they experience and participate in a variety of work placements both within and outside the college environment. Finally, upon completing their studies, CCL students graduate in a formal ceremony with their non-disabled peers. Table 1 provides an overview of the modules with corresponding instruction and assessment methods.

**Tab. 1:** CCL course outline

	METHODS OF INSTRUCTION							METHODS OF ASSESSMENT				AS-			
	lectures	in class discussion	individual work	group work	homework	practical instruction	other	individual presentation	group presentation	individual quiz	reflective journal /reflection	participation	portfolio	home assignment	other
YEAR 1															
learning to learn	X	X	X	X				X	X						
career development	X	X	X	X				X	X						X
expressive arts	X	X					X		X	X			X		
personal effectiveness	X	X	X	X				X							
written and oral communication	X	X	X	X				X	X						
financial management	X	X	X	X				X	X						
information and communication technology	X	X	X	X				X	X						
sports, exercise and nutrition	X					X					X	X			
YEAR 2															
research	X	X		X				X							
social science and international perspective	X	X		X	X			X							
work placement	X						X				X				
applied learning skills	X						X	X	X		X				
sports, exercise and nutrition	X					X					X	X			
creative arts participation and/or performance	X	X					X					X		X	

### **4.3 CCL Module Example – Research Methods**

Within the CCL course, each module is assessed and reflected on by staff with the input and feedback of the CCL students and an external examiner at the end of each academic year. One module is presented here – the Research Methods Module – to illustrate how the CCL curriculum can offer students the potential to develop research capacity and participate in a research project that is relevant to their needs and interests.

The research methods module, delivered in the second year of the certificate, adopted the Research Active Programme (RAP) curriculum from 2012 (Salmon, Neylon, & Carey, 2012). The RAP programme draws from the work of the Inclusive Research Network (IRN) (IRN 2009; IRN 2010) and self-advocacy programmes delivered at the NIID (Salmon & Carey 2013). With the aim of developing research capacity among people with intellectual disabilities in Ireland, the module provides students with introductory knowledge and skills to understand and take part in projects as co-researchers.

The module runs over 11 weeks and consists of 2 hour sessions focusing on the following themes: research question, research ethics, data collection methods (e.g., qualitative interviews, focus groups, survey), data analysis, and dissemination of findings. Students also undertake a research project at the end of the module where they become co-researchers of an existing research project, for example, The Home and Independence study (see Burke, Donohue, Dooher et al. 2014). Summative evaluation is used to assess students’ final projects and presentations. The module was evaluated during the academic year 2012-2013 (see Salmon, Garcia Iriarte and Burns, in preparation). Evaluation findings indicated that the learning experience was overall positive for students. The evaluation allowed students to indicate their preferences. For example they preferred a range of learning methods such as class discussions, demonstrations and group work. The evaluation also helped evaluators ascertain the areas where students gained knowledge and skills, for example, in relation to steps to conduct research projects and those where more work was needed such as research ethics.

### **4.4 How students learn on the CCL programme**

In the above mentioned 2007 NDA report, six lessons were identified; one of these lessons addressed the need to categorise the diverse learning styles of CCL students and develop an awareness of creative teaching methods for this group of individuals. In 2012 a study was undertaken that set out to categorise how students experience learning on the CCL programme (See Kubiak, 2013; Kubiak & Shevlin 2015). Four categories that describe learning were identified for students attending the CCL: The Cognitive Stages of Learning, Self-Regulation of Lear-



ning, Learning as Collective Meaning Making, and The Supportive Environment and Learning. These are presented and defined below.

*Cognitive Stages of Learning.* This category pays attention to what is happening in the minds of the learners; their acts of learning are seen as a cognitive process. This stage is divided into three sub-categories: (i) learning as increasing one's knowledge – learning is viewed as adding to one's current knowledge base; (ii) learning as memorising and reproducing – knowledge is “non-problematic” (Paakkari, Tynjälä, & Kannas 2011, 708) and involves the storage and remembering of facts, and (iii) learning and applying knowledge which sees students being able to apply aspects of the curriculum into practice.

*Self-regulation of Learning.* This second category deals with the learning process which consists of three cyclical phases:

1. The forethought phase – processes and beliefs that occur before efforts to learn. This includes the two main classes of task analysis and self-motivation (Zimmerman 2002); task-analysis involves planning for goals and self-motivation stems from students' self-efficacy beliefs.
2. The performance phase – the processes that occur during behavioural implementation. This phase falls into two main classes: self-control and self-observation. Self-control refers to the deployment of specific learning strategies, such as (i) Brainstorming (Osborn 1953); (ii) Concept Maps (Novak 1991), and (iii) mnemonics (Scruggs & Mastropieri 2000) defined here as visual and auditory learning strategies mainly experienced through the medium of PowerPoint presentations.
3. The self-reflection phase (processes that occur after each learning effort). This third cyclical phase consists of two main classes: self-evaluation and self-reaction. Self-evaluation offers potential for self-improvement through reflection as seen in the use of reflection journals. Self-reaction involves engaging with and becoming more aware of one's emotions during the performance of learning.

*Learning as Collective Meaning Making.* This third category moves from meaning making from an individual level to collective or shared meaning. The difference between this category and Categories 1 and 2 is that students do not only learn on their own, but also participate in a dialogue with others, such as peers, family/guardians and (iii) college mentors.

*The Supportive Environment and Learning.* This final category can be summarised in the words of one student – a “safe classroom space” – somewhere where she could feel comfortable enough to ask questions and share ideas with her classmates. Paakkari, et al., (2011) sees these educational spaces as places that support conditions for the development of students' own views and can influence both individual students as well as their peers.

CCL students learn best when particular teaching strategies are used. These include strategies that helped learners to remember important information, such as brainstorming, concept maps and visual and auditory mnemonics. Learners also valued an awareness of self-regulated learning and appreciated a type of instruction that stimulated the learning process as a thinking activity, one that explicated the process of learning instead of conceiving it simply as the memorisation and reproduction of facts. Thirdly, teaching for this group of students can also be viewed as collaboration between the classroom lecturers, student peers, parents/guardians, and undergraduate mentors. Finally, a classroom climate (or atmosphere) that creates a positive, motivating and safe environment allowed CCL students to engage with the curriculum, develop rapport with their peers, and acquire personal growth.

## **5 Transition from the CCL – ‘PATH’**

On the successful completion of all CCL modules, a transition process is offered to graduating students and their families. This process is informed by Person Centred Planning (PCP) which was originally developed to counteract the traditional „systems approach“ to the placement of students with disabilities within special educational settings and allow the focus to be placed on the voice of the individual and their family (Meaden, Sheldan, Kelli & DeGrazia 2010). PCP has been seen as particularly useful in the transition to further life stages of young people with disabilities as it offers them an opportunity to identify their hopes and dreams for the future (Davies, Burke & Mattingly 2009). 97% of Transition and Postsecondary Programmes for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TYSID) reported using Person Centred Planning in the first year of their postsecondary programmes in over 30 third level sites across America in 2011 (Grigal, Hart, Smith, Domin & Sulewski, 2013).

The process entitled ‘Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope’ (PATH), (O’Brien, Perapoint & Kahn 2010) is used as part of the CCL students transition from TCD and into the next stage of their lives. Within this process each individual’s plan is graphed on a large piece of paper with the ‘path finder’ (i.e. student) supported to explore and identify: their current situation, short and long term goals, possible obstacles they may encounter, who will support them on their journey, and first steps of action towards their identified goals. A CCL PATH normally takes between 2-3 hours to complete and is facilitated by two CCL course tutors – a facilitator and a graphic facilitator. On completion of the PATH students are invited to take it home as a continued source of inspiration and encouragement (see Abb. 1).



**Abb 1:** CCL Student PATH

### 5.1 Graduate pathways

Separate from the PATH, in 2011, a formal follow up with graduates of the CCL was conducted. CCL students who graduated from the course between 2008 and 2010 (53) were invited to take part in the study with over half (63% /34) participating. The Graduate Survey followed up students' career and personal progression in the first couple of years after graduation. The survey explored the experiences and outcomes (personal development, social life, employment, and further education) of graduates of the CCL. In keeping with the inclusive ethos of the NIID, the survey design was collaborative, involving the CCL team, research staff and CCL graduates.

Feedback on outcomes indicated mixed results – personal development was the strongest positive outcome for graduates, with varied reported outcomes for further education / training and employment. In contrast to personal and social outcomes, feedback on employment and educational outcomes was mixed. While almost all (92.2%) graduates had held a job and / or participated in an educational course since graduation and the vast majority (71%) were employed, payment and hours was a concern for graduates. Amounts of pay and hours for graduate jobs were a further concern.

The findings suggest that while graduates had experienced personal growth and developed further friendships as a result of undertaking the course, they faced barriers in maintaining friendships and accessing the open job market. These barriers need to be addressed in order for graduates to fully realise their potential and use the skills learned during their time at college.

## 6 CCL and the Wider Community

Systems barriers to true inclusion for our students necessitate cooperation within and outside of TCD. Inclusivity in education, the use of diverse teaching methods and national and international cooperation are espoused values of Trinity College, as articulated through the most recent strategic plan (2014-19) for the university. These values were reflected in the collegial relationships between departments in supporting the establishment of the CCL programme within Trinity College. It is also worth noting that a recent study by O’Connor, Kubiak, Espiner and O’Brien (2012) demonstrated how a tertiary education environment can contribute to drawing out the best in students with ID, their peers and faculty.

When the CCL programme was established in 2007, Trinity College was pro-active in facilitating local, national and international engagement with the programme. One such relationship which supported the successful development of the CCL programme both within the college and the wider community was with the Trinity Foundation. The Foundation was founded as an independent charity in 1994 and continues to support various Trinity projects, initiatives and engagement with the wider local and global communities through fundraising and engagement with the college alumni. The partnership between NIID and the Foundation has led to the creation of the NIID ‘Business Partners Network’ which has been and continues to be one of the most exciting and beneficial initiatives of the CCL programme with regard to employment opportunities for CCL students. The Network is made up of a range of companies and organisations whose mission statement advocates for inclusion and diversity within the work place. It supports both the CCL programme and students in a range of ways which are tailored around each individual partner’s interest and scope. A financial contribution from each company directly supports the student’s successful engagement with college and also includes a student hardship fund, and ongoing developments of inclusive employment initiatives.

An equally vital role of the network is the provision of work placements to the CCL Junior and Senior Freshmen cohorts. These placements vary in length: Junior Freshmen undertake a short term placement while Senior Freshmen undertake a substantially longer placement which runs over two college semesters. While on placement each CCL student is allocated a job coach, (a person recruited through the CCL Mentoring programme) and a champion, (an employee within the organisation of the Business Partner). The placement process also offers the student and placement provider an opportunity to voice their reflections and recommendations throughout and on completion of the work experience. The network of NIID Business Partners continues to advocate for equality within the workplace for adults with intellectual disabilities through a sharing of experiences with re-

gard to the provision of placements for the CCL students and the development of long term employment opportunities for adults with intellectual disabilities.

## 7 Conclusion

Since 2004, the NIID has worked to promote the rights of people with intellectual disabilities through its mission of inclusion through Education, Research and Advocacy. Parallel with this endeavour, individual NIID staff have been working on a variety of inclusive research projects to help achieve this core aim. NIID has aligned its work within the overarching framework of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, along with national legislation and government policies on disability. Since its inception, the NIID has aimed to create a paradigm shift in opportunity, policy and service provision that will enable people with intellectual disabilities to be empowered and become active participants within Irish society.

Much has been achieved, but more work needs to be done. Inclusive education, policy and practice have made significant progress internationally and within Ireland over the past decade. Within Ireland, people who were once considered 'non-educable' are now gradually becoming more active participants within education. Irish legislation enshrining an inclusive education policy (EPSEN 2004) has been enacted and support structures within schools have been developed to enable children with intellectual disabilities to access the curriculum. However, critical barriers remain to be addressed if people with intellectual disabilities are to become active participants and achieve meaningful outcomes within post-secondary education, employment and the wider society.

As the time of writing, the NIID has entered a new phase of its development by being fully incorporated into Trinity's School of Education. The School plans to build on the solid foundation established by NIID since 2004 with one of the main priorities being to accredit the CCL programme on the National Framework of Qualification (a ten-level system giving an academic or vocational value to qualifications obtained in Ireland). More specifically for the CCL programme, the School aims to focus on a niche that has education at the heart and pathways thereafter, while also encompassing models of inclusion for people with an intellectual disability in the workplace. These planned activities will enable the NIID to make a significant contribution to policy and practice for people with an intellectual disability within the area of education and employment while continuing to remain committed to a person centred approach where all stakeholders are invited to work together to continue building capacity with inclusive third level education for adults with intellectual disabilities.

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**Inklusive Forschung** stellt einen Ansatz dar, in dem Menschen mit Lernschwierigkeiten über den gesamten Forschungsprozess hinweg eine aktiv gestaltende Rolle einnehmen. Sie verkörpert somit eine *gemeinsame Forschung von Menschen mit und ohne akademischen Bildungshintergrund*. Während sich dieser Forschungsansatz in den letzten drei Jahrzehnten in vielen englischsprachigen Ländern zunehmend etabliert hat, begann ein vergleichbarer Prozess im deutschsprachigen Raum erst ab den frühen 2000er Jahren – hat aber seitdem eine interessante Entwicklung erfahren, die bislang kaum dokumentiert wurde. Dieses Buch hat daher das Ziel, einen Überblick zu aktuellen und bisherigen Bemühungen im Kontext von Inklusiver Forschung in Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz zu geben. Zudem werden hier die gesammelten (Forschungs-)Erfahrungen sowie die damit verbundenen Diskussionen und Herausforderungen kritisch reflektiert.

Zudem finden sich in dieser zweisprachigen HerausgeberInnenschaft Beiträge von VordenkerInnen aus der internationalen Forschungscommunity.

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